

AN OLD TREE

Will Not Bear Trans-planting

BY MARTIN GOLDSCHAFT

The nineteenth century made some changes in personal responsibility. During the early part of it, when there was more inheritance among men, it was necessary to do a great deal to the honor of individuals. An exercise of anything keeps it alive. When it is dormant it is not retrograde. It was not till 1800 or thereabouts that the punch system for fare collectors on railroads and street car lines was introduced, and the companies made the public their agents, informing them of the collector's duties. It was one of these notes posted in a street car that gave rise to Mark Twain's celebrated doggerel:

A long trip slip for an eight cent fare,
A short trip slip for a six cent fare,
A half trip slip for a four cent fare,
Punched in the presence of the passengers.
Punch, brother punch; punch with care;
Punch in the presence of the passengers!

Then, too, the merchant of the early part of the nineteenth century considered it a disgrace to fail in business. He had inherited from his ancestors the tradition that in monetary transactions he could only maintain a respected position among his fellow men by paying dollar for dollar. Many a man of that time died of a broken heart not entirely because of the loss of his wealth, but the loss of his honor.

These illustrations could be added ad libitum, but the two mentioned will suffice to give the younger members of the community today an idea of those times when there were no patent devices for insuring honesty.

When the war between the states broke out Ned Carleton, a boy of fifteen, enlisted, though he was three years under the required age, and marched south with his regiment. After the battle of Shiloh he was reported missing and was dropped from the regimental roster. His family mourned him as dead.

In the year 1900 a man giving his name as Judson MacIntyre called upon an oculist to save the sight of one of his eyes. The oculist after a number of visits on the part of the patient discovered that he was suffering from a depression at a certain point in his skull, causing a pressure on the optic nerve, and recommended trepanning the part. MacIntyre was operated on by a surgeon and the moment he became conscious after the passing of the effect of the anesthetic cried out, rising to a sitting position:

"Stand fast, boys! We're drivin' 'em."

"Don't excite yourself," said the surgeon gently forcing the patient down on his back.

"Oh, I see," said MacIntyre, looking about him, "I've been hit. I'm in hospital, I suppose."

"The operation has been successful. You'll be all right very soon."

"Did we lick 'em?"

"Lick whom?"

"The Confederates."

Those about the patient looked at one another as much as to say, "He's out of his head."

"You must keep quiet, Mr. MacIntyre," said the surgeon.

"MacIntyre! Who are you talking to? My name's not MacIntyre; I'm Ned Carleton of the Indiana volunteers."

And so he was. For forty years a pressure on his brain, occasioned by a wound in the head, had made him oblivious to his existence for the first fifteen years of his life. How he had come to assume another name he didn't quite remember, but during four decades he had lived under that name. But he had not lived in America. His earliest remembrance was of Australia, though how he got there he didn't know. He had been a sailor a part of the time since he had his second existence, while the rest had been spent as a sheep herder.

And now Carleton, fifty-five years old, having recovered from the operation, was obliged to go out into the world and earn a living. He had been well educated for a boy of fifteen and wrote an excellent hand. He went about applying for a clerkship. Everywhere he applied he was received with surprise.

"We don't hire any one of your age for a clerk," he was told. "We prefer very young men."

"I'm a good penman. Can't you give me some copying to do?"

"Typewriting?"

"Typewriting! What's that?"

"That young lady will explain it to you," pointing to a girl clicking machine.

The poor fellow, taking up as he did the thread of life from the age of sixteen, did not apply for a man's work.

One day Carleton, being kindly received by a benevolent looking gentleman, told the man his story, eliciting a great deal of interest.

"I will do what I can for you," said the gentleman. "We need a collector. How would you like that position?"

"Glad to get anything," said Carleton, "and I'm sure you will find me honest. I'll not pocket my collections."

The gentleman did not seem impressed with that phase of the case, but he gave Carleton the position, naming his salary at \$10 a week. Carleton was surprised.

"Do you mean, Mr. Gregory," he asked, "that I am to be trusted to

collect funds for you and be paid only \$10 a week? It seems to me that you need a trustworthy person for that service, and a trustworthy person should command more money."

"Oh, we don't take any account of honesty. There are insurance companies who stick to that."

"And if I appropriate the funds I collect?"

"They will secure your arrest and put you in jail."

Carleton looked at the man in astonishment.

"Do you think, Mr. Gregory, that to deny a man your confidence is conducive to honesty?"

"To speak frankly, I do not."

"Then why do you refuse to trust me?"

"Because it is the system under which all men work. We cannot do business under different conditions from other concerns."

"May I consider your offer over night?"

"Yes, if you like," with some surprise.

Carleton had been born of Christian parents, who had taught him to be scrupulous in the matter of "mine and thine," never to tell a lie and to consider himself required to deal honorably by all men. This offer of a position with an insurance policy on his honor was a bitter pill for him to swallow, but he must make a living, and the next morning he went to Mr. Gregory and told him that he was ready to go to work.

"Very well; go upstairs and have your photograph taken."

"Photograph! What's that for?"

"A custom of these times. All our employees are photographed. If they run away with our funds and we have a likeness their capture is easier."

"Do you mean, Mr. Gregory, that you keep a rogues' gallery of your clerks?"

"Not at all. We keep the gallery, and it is for the individual to make a record of himself."

Carleton stood looking at the gentleman with eyes wide open. Finally he said:

"I was brought up by a father and a mother who would have considered it dangerous to me not to give me their implicit confidence. You are treating your fellow men as they dared not treat me, and by doing so if you are not encouraging dishonesty you are surely paving the way for it. If I acceded to your terms I should consider that so far as you are concerned I had a right to beat you if I could. This would be the first step to my own degradation."

The next would be to beat the rest of the world if I could do so without risk to myself. I am much obliged for your offer, but I cannot accept it. I was born at a time when all men were trusted till they proved unworthy. I came to my youth at a time when my countrymen were acting upon the highest principle of honor in giving their lives for their fellow men. Suppose that vast army who died on the battlefield and in the hospital should rise from their graves and confront you. Would they not shudder at the standard of honor which has replaced the one under which they gave up their lives?"

Mr. Gregory listened to these words, spoken by one who had really but just renewed his existence from that period when the youth of the country had lived under a higher standard of honor, a standard of true manhood, and when he had finished said:

"The years, the centuries, are rolling on. The standard of one age is not the standard of another. But while we must preserve our individual honor we must submit to that which exists about us."

"You have passed with but a single step over forty years. You find that the system, or, rather, the lack of system, of that time has been replaced by another. The youth of '61 would have scorned to accept a position wherein provisions were taken to avoid loss by their dishonesty and to facilitate their capture if they betrayed a trust. We have not now the youth of '61. We have the youth of the twentieth century. Nevertheless they are the same beings, and the latter may maintain their self respect as well as the former, for, after all, it is the man and not the system."

"Doubtless you are right, Mr. Gregory," after some thought, "but to transplant the youth of '61 into 1901 is a failure. You might as well grow oranges in the northern states. I thank you for the position offered me, but I shall decline it, not that I would demean myself by accepting it, for you have shown me that after all it is the man rather than the system, but that I cannot bear transplanting from the soil of '61 to that of 1901."

That night Carleton slept on a bench in a park, or, rather, he lay awake, thinking of those who had been fighting with him in the "horns' nest" of Shiloh. Who of the company had fallen? Who had lived and grown to old age with the unexpired portion of the century? Doubtless those who were now alone had ceased to be a part of the system in vogue during their youth and had gilded unconsciously into the systems of their old age.

One morning a body was found floating in a river and dragged ashore.

The clothing was shabby, the only adornment being an army badge made of gun metal. It was the corpse of Edward Carleton. He had spoken truly when he said that he would not bear transplanting from the middle of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth. He had tried several jobs, but the sense that he was not trusted so worked upon his feelings that he at last gave up every one of them. Having been taken from an atmosphere where he breathed freely, he decided to go where breathing was not necessary to existence.

"Do you mean, Mr. Gregory," he asked, "that I am to be trusted to

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